CLASSROOM DISCUSSION: AN ACTIVITY TO PROMOTE SPEAKING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract  
In the era of information and technology, every people are demanding to master the English language for communication purpose. Nowadays English is widely used for different purpose such as academic, business, diplomacy, news and information, entertainment and others. It proves that the English language has become a basic requirement for students and job seeker in this increasingly globalized world. In order to meet the needs for international communication, Indonesians students need to be proficient in English, especially in oral communication skill. Communication skill is highly needed by students in order to prepare them for their possible further academic career and future workplace. This paper is intended to discuss about classroom discussion. Classroom discussion is one kinds of activity that is done by the teacher in teaching and learning. In this activity, the students will present their opinions to the class. Therefore, the students get the opportunities to speak English well. It also gives valuable experience for them to prepare themselves to use English in multi society where English is a demanding tool for communication in our today’s life.

Keywords: Classroom, discussion, speaking activities  

INTRODUCTION  

As a language skill, speaking is one of the productive skills that must be mastered by the students. People may often judge our language competence from our speaking rather than from any of other language skills. If the students do not perform well in their speaking, people will judge them as unsuccessful language learner. Most students think that speaking is often considered as the most difficult skill to be learned. Although, they are aware that speaking is one of the most important skill to be developed and they also consider it as the most challenging skill to acquire.

Students need a lot of practice the English language to make them able to communicate in multi-society. To prepare students, teachers should be able to give them...
a great experience in learning language and encourage students to have practice of communication in English because language is means of communication. Students are considered to have language proficiency when they know how to use the language in a various communication setting.

In developing students communicative competence teacher should be able to encourage students to get involved actively in learning process. To make the students take part actively in learning process and use the language, a teacher should bring interactive activities into the classroom. Classroom discussion is one of the activities that can bring about interactivity between students and teacher, students and students. Indeed, the goal is to get as many students involved in talking to one another as possible and for the teacher to fade into the background. Students are given opportunities to practice English language in situation which encourage them to express their needs, ideas, and opinions. They also will practice in how to talk and listen to teachers.

TEACHING SPEAKING

Students may not ignore speaking even though they have some problems in speaking. Students think mostly about their mistakes, shy to say something or nervous to speak because their English is not good. Actually, as long as they speak a mistaken is not counted as failure in learning. They must be involved with the language. In other words, they must practice with the language. They must be able to seek out opportunities to use the language in any situation particularly in real communication. Real communication is they can understand each other even though their grammar is not correct.

Nowadays, many linguistics and ESL/EFL teachers agree on the goal of teaching speaking is should improve students’ communicative skill. Students learn to speak in second or foreign language by interacting. Communicative language teaching and collaborative learning serve best for this aim. Communicative language teaching is based on real-life situations that require communication. By using this method the students will have the great opportunity of communicating with each other in the target language. In
short, English teacher should create a classroom environment where the students have real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful task that promote speaking.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Challenging students to communicate with other students in terms of group discussion, it is clear enough will give them great experience exposure that language. It is also the way for students to improve their English particularly in speaking performance. According to Apple (2006:286) it is important that language teachers include task that allows students to use the language skills that they have learned to communicate with others in the classroom. Means that, in learning English it is important for learner to use the language that they are learning. Group discussion in the classroom gives students the opportunity to communicate their needs, ideas, and opinion by using target language in a meaningful way and the students will develop communicative competence.

Moreover, it provides opportunities for rehearsal of real-life situations and provides opportunities for real communication. It is supported by Celce-Murcia (2001) in classroom discussion students regularly work in groups or pairs to transfer and negotiate meaning in situation where one person has information that others lack. If the activity is properly designed, participating in class discussion can provide students with an enjoyable learning experience that allows them to interact with others using only the language that they are learning. Also, discussion where it generally in group allows students to engage in a cooperative task and in problem solving activities.

According to Mangal and Mangal (2009:244) discussion held within group, interchange of ideas between students and the teacher or among a group of students, resulting into active learning for realization of predetermined teaching learning objective. In this case, the word of discussions can be described as the situation in which teacher and students or students and other students talk with one another and share ideas, opinions, and find solutions in their discussion group or they will arrive at a conclusion. In other words, discussion activity will help students to learn how to talk to and listen to teachers, in how to address questions and look to authority figures for answers.
In addition, classroom discussion is an activity where the students get a big opportunity to express their own ideas and it can arouse their motivation to involve in a discussion in the classroom. By using classroom discussion it is hoped the students can develop their conceptual understanding, communication skills and thinking processes, and also involvement and engagement. Besides, students’ ability of speaking maybe improved.

**Application of Classroom Discussion**

A good plan for his/her successful classroom discussion process should be made in applying the classroom discussion. Although spontaneity and flexibility are suggested in it. Before the discussion, it is necessary that the purpose of the discussion activity is set by the teacher. In this way, the discussion points are relevant to this purpose; therefore, students do not spend their time chatting with each other about irrelevant things (Kayi, 2006).

Similar to Kayi, Arends (2007:420) suggested that in applying classroom discussion teachers should consider five steps in planning the discussion in the process of teaching and learning. They are:

1. Teacher should consider the purpose of discussion before applying the approach in the class in order the teacher can check for students’ understanding of assignment or presentation through recitations, teach teaching skill and share the experience to the students.

2. Teacher should consider the students’ activities when he/she has to apply the classroom discussion in the class. He/she should consider in how particular students in the class will respond differently to various kinds of questions. Teacher also predicts how some students will want to talk all the time whereas others will be unenthusiastic to say anything.

3. In classroom discussion it is essential to choose an approach. Three approaches that can be used in the classroom discussion are recitations, inquiry or problem based discussion, and sharing-based discussion.
a. Recitations: giving the information on a particular topic and brief question and answer sessions about the information. It can provide teacher with a mean of checking the students’ understanding. It can also arouse students’ motivation to complete their assignments or to listen carefully when the teacher is talking.

b. Inquiry or problem-based discussion: giving the puzzle situations to the students that are not immediately explainable. Teacher encourages the students to ask question because they are curious about the puzzle given by the teacher.

c. Sharing-based discussion: sharing experiences through dialogue will help the students to form and express thoughts and opinions independently. In this approach ideas are developed or expanded and questions are raised for future study.

4. Make a plan is one of important point in classroom discussion. A lesson plan for a discussion should consist of objectives and a content out-line. The plan should have the targeted content and a well-conceived focus statement, the description of a puzzling event, and/or a list of questions.

5. The appropriate of using the physical space is also one of important things in classroom discussion. Use physical space appropriately can influence the students’ behavior and their communication both of with the teacher and their friends. U-shape seating pattern and circle seating pattern are two recommended seating pattern.

In addition, Arends (2007) also explains about the five phase in applying classroom discussion. The first is clarifying aims and establish set. In this phase, the teacher explaining the purposes of the discussion, giving the appropriate issue to the students, inviting the students to the puzzling situation and getting the students set to participate and respond to the discussion. Second, focus the discussion. In this phase, relating the beginning discussion questions, focusing to the students’ prior knowledge or experience, describing the puzzling situation given in the previous phase, explaining the
discussion issue, and encouraging the students’ participation. Third, hold the discussion. In this phase, it is important for teacher to monitor the students’ interaction, to ask some questions related to the issue, to give the chance to the students to presents their ideas, to respond the ideas given by the students, to enforce the ground rules, to keep records of the discussion, and to express his or her own ideas. Fourth, end the discussion. In this phase, teacher helping the students to end the discussion, making the summarize of discussion, and explaining the important role about the discuss issue for the students. The last phase is debriefing the discussion. In this phase, the explanation of advantages and disadvantages in doing the discussion should be explained by the teacher.

The Benefits of Classroom Discussion

There are some experts argue about the benefit of classroom discussion, such as; Mangal and Mangal (2009), Buskist and Benassi (2012), Orlichet all (2013). Classroom discussion have been shown to be successful to improve students’ skill in English, encourage students become active, and increasing their autonomy. Discussion fosters critical thinking and quick decision making, and students learn how to express and justify themselves in polite ways while disagreeing with the others. It also can make them to develop their tolerance, understanding and respect of other’s opinion, responsibility for one’s own learning, actions, and responsibility to the group.

Moreover, students will be able to work with others in the team, develop their interpersonal skills and independence. Besides, they are also going to be encouraged, innovated, have creativity through deep learning, and require. Student thinks about their learning, the issues and the problems. In short, for most language teachers the six major benefits to using discussion in the classroom are:

1. Improving students speaking skills in English
2. Encouraging students to become active (students-centered)
3. Increasing their autonomy
4. Increasing students interest
5. Improving students communication and presentation skill
6. Collaborative/work together
CONCLUSION

Teaching speaking is a very important part of foreign language learning. The ability to communicate in a foreign language clearly and efficiently contributes to the success of the learner in school and their future life. With this aim, various speaking activities are highly needed in developing basic interactive skills. Classroom discussion in one of the activity that language teachers can bring into the classroom in order to create interactive activity, encourage students to have practice in English language in classroom in natural way, and to improve students’ communication and presentation skills.

REFERENCES


